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ABSTRACT

Problems occur in teaching English to the child whose native language is not English because of a lack of relevant research about the specification of the native language and the transfer of reading skills from one language to another. Most bilingual instruction in the United States is based on either the "native language approach" (literacy is achieved in the child's native language first) or the direct method (the second language, at least initially, is the primary language of instruction). Another problem is that it is not clear how the successful transfer of reading skills occurs across two languages, or what factors are relevant to such transfer. Some alternate approaches to bilingual reading instruction (especially Spanish-English) include reading in the standard native language, using dialect readers, and teaching reading in English but letting children use their native language in informal discussions among themselves. The fact that there is not a "best" teaching method in bilingual instruction, however, makes research in this area a clear necessity. (Audience response following presentation of the paper is included.) (RL)

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Reading and the Bilingual Child

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Historical Perspective

Until relatively recently no special provisions were made in public schools for children from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Such children were totally immersed in an English-language curriculum along with their native English-speaking counterparts, and little or no recognition was given their native language. (In some cases the use of the native language was actively discouraged by the imposition of disciplinary measures.) This educational practice reflected the accepted social premise of the time that all ethnic groups would blend into the great U.S. melting pot. The school experience was thought to be a crucial factor in integrating non-English-speaking children into the dominant culture, and an exclusively English language-learning environment, yesterday's version of today's "total immersion" program, was thought to be the most efficient means of accomplishing this goal. Although thousands upon thousands of immigrant children were educated in such English-language programs, success in reducing minority groups to a single "all-American" linguistic and cultural model appears to have been somewhat limited. "Immigrants to America did not cease being what they were and did not, except in rather superficial ways, become something different when they were naturalized as American citizens. Changes that occurred were far less extensive and less structural than they were believed to be. In most cases a bicultural style developed which enabled American and ethnic identities to coexist and influence each other over time" (Andersson & Boyer, 1970, p. 3). Despite the monolingual, monocultural orientation of most American schools, linguistic and cultural pluralism prevailed,

sustained by early as well as more recent immigrant groups.

Bilingual education in the United States received its major impetus during the decade of the 1960's. Two factors are significant in this development. First, a large number of Cubans, many of them professionals, entered Florida, and suddenly thousands of Cuban children were enrolled in Florida schools. Special programs were required, Cuban professionals were recruited to assist in the development of these programs, and the feasibility of bilingual education in the U.S. was demonstrated. The second and probably more important factor was the general socio-political climate in the 1960's. Arguments that non-English-speaking children were not faring well in our educational system, that they were dropping out at higher rates and earlier ages than their native-English-speaking counterparts, and that the school system's insensitivity to their native language and culture was primarily responsible, found a receptive audience. In 1967 the Bilingual Education Act, designed to meet the needs of children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, was passed. Since then, additional federal and state legislation has been passed and judicial decisions rendered concerning linguistically different pupil populations. Most recently, the Office of Civil Rights of HEW issued a set of guidelines for schools to comply with the 1974 Supreme Court decision in the case of Lau vs. Nichols, which requires school districts to provide equal educational opportunity for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds.[1] The guidelines require that school districts having twenty or more students from a single language background develop

bilingual education programs.[2] The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has estimated that between 1.8 and 2.5 million children in the U.S. should receive their initial schooling in bilingual programs. Bilingual education, once the lofty ideal of a few visionaries, is now an everyday challenge to school districts throughout the country.

The educational system is suddenly under pressure to comply with new regulations, to prepare teachers, to identify appropriate pupil populations, to prepare teaching materials and methodologies, and to develop a philosophy of bilingual education upon which all of the aforementioned are to be based. Without a tradition of bilingual schooling in the United States, and lacking lead-time to prepare for this educational revolution, it is no surprise that school districts were and are ill-prepared, and that little research has been conducted in the U.S. which bears directly on the major issues of educating children bilingually. (The limited research that is cited typically reports on experiences in other countries.) The result is that many of the basic principles guiding the development of bilingual education in the U.S. have been stated as axioms.

One such axiom, involving reading instruction, states that literacy should be achieved first in the child's native language. This will subsequently be referred to as the native language approach. (This approach is contrasted with the direct method where a second language is, at least initially, the primary language of instruction; children are introduced to reading

through the second language, and only after oral fluency is demonstrated.) Two standard works on bilingual education, BILINGUAL SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED STATES (Andersson and Boyer, 1970) and A HANDBOOK OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION (Saville and Troike, 1971) unequivocally support the native language approach. Referring to a 1953 UNESCO report, Andersson and Boyer state, "Educators are agreed...that reading and writing in the first language should precede literacy in a second" (p. 45). Saville and Troike agree, stating that "the child should begin reading in his dominant language" (p. 50). Such statements are extensively quoted and expanded upon in bilingual education literature. So widely is this notion accepted, in fact, that to suggest that it may be open to question is to run the risk of being labled confused, insensitive, ultra-conservative, or even racist.

Cognizant of this risk, we will attempt to examine critically some of the issues involved in teaching reading to bilingual children. We will briefly examine research which appears to bear directly upon the question of the priority of native language literacy, and we will explore various issues which, although not explicitly articulated, appear to be closely tied to current policies and practices in bilingual education. Finally, we will raise some practical questions concerning the implementation of native language literacy programs.

The Native Language Literacy Axiom: Relevant Research

The native language literacy axiom appears to have been originally based upon a widely-accepted notion that reading should

not be taught until oral fluency in a language is demonstrated. This notion has served as a basis for the sequencing of the four skills in foreign language instruction (i.e., understanding, speaking, reading, and writing). In the area of reading, it underlies arguments favoring instructional materials which relate closely to children's prior linguistic backgrounds, including the use of child-generated language experience materials. It is also fundamental to recommendations that dialect readers be prepared for those children whose dialects differ significantly from the standard written language.

Although there is considerable agreement that initial instruction in reading should occur only after a degree of oral language competence has been attained, accounts of Dick and Jane readers being thrust into the hands of native Spanish-speaking first-grade pupils, who were not provided even minimal oral language instruction in English, are all too recent and too familiar. Proponents of bilingual education frequently cite such abuses in attempting to justify the native language literacy approach. Viewed from this perspective, the basis for many of the arguments in favor of native language literacy appears to be simply a rejection of admittedly improper pedagogical practices. It is unlikely that anyone would quarrel with this criticism. It is also clear, however, that advocates of the native language literacy approach cannot expect to base their arguments solely on negative evidence from poorly implemented direct method programs, because such claims are easily contested. Specialists in the area of

English as a second language, for example, have challenged the categorical denunciation of direct method (ESL) programs contained in the Office of Civil Rights Guidelines for bilingual education (i.e., "Because an ESL program does not consider the affective nor cognitive development of students...(it) is not appropriate"). These ESL specialists point out that there have been many successful direct method (ESL) programs which they believe have considered both affective and cognitive development and which have carefully developed oral language skills prior to introducing reading (cf. Galvan, 1975).[3]

Stronger and more positive claims about the efficacy of the native language approach must be made. Saville and Troike (1971) attempt to strengthen their argument by stating that, "The basic skills of reading transfer readily from one language to another" (p. 50). Gutierrez (1975) adds, "children learn to read best through their native language. The decoding skills learned in Spanish will establish a firm base for the Spanish-speaking child and will transfer to the development of reading and writing skills in English without loss of time and energy." (p. 5). Unfortunately, these stronger claims are supported by little convincing research evidence. Even the most frequently cited study, Modiano's research in Chiapas, Mexico (1968),[4] is, by the author's own admission, not a convincing demonstration of the superiority of the native language approach.

Briefly, Modiano compared Indian pupil achievement in two educational settings, a direct Spanish language approach in federal

and state schools, and a native language approach in Indian schools. Her results indicated that children taught Spanish reading after receiving native-language reading instruction in the Indian schools scored higher on Spanish reading tests than did children taught exclusively in Spanish in the federal and state schools. But, among other problems with the study (cf. Engle, 1975, pp. 297-298), Modiano's results were contaminated by the fact that the direct Spanish language instructional approach used in the federal and state schools was poorly implemented. Children in these schools were far from fluent in Spanish before reading instruction was begun, and Spanish language instruction was not systematic. As Engle (1975) concludes, "...it is not surprising that (Modiano's) results suggest that the native language approach...schools were superior. The study does not present a comparison of the good use of the direct method with the native language approach" (p. 297).

Other studies which purport to contrast the native language literacy approach with the direct method reveal highly contradictory results. The data do not provide a sound empirical basis for assertions about native language reading instruction in bilingual education programs in the U.S. Engle (1975) in her excellent critical review of twenty-four studies related to the topic of medium of instruction in early school years for minority group children concluded that the studies "...varied in every conceivable way, and most provided no substantial evidence as to which approach is better." (p. 320). Among problems identified in these studies are the lack of information concerning the cognitive and psycho-

linguistic mechanism of transfer involved in learning to read a second language, the inadequacy of data concerning the political and cultural relationships between language groups that influence language acceptance, and the uneven quality of the educational programs studied.

A position favoring the native language approach is further complicated by the results of experimental bilingual programs in Canada, which appear to demonstrate the value of the direct method approach. The St. Lambert Project, begun in Montreal in 1965, exposed native English-speaking children to a total immersion French language and literacy program during the first years of school. Test results indicated that the anglophones achieved a high degree of fluency in French and that their English language skills compared favorably with those of English-speaking children in regular English programs (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Because the original subjects in the experimental program were middle and upper-middle class children, volunteered for participation by their parents, there existed the possibility that English-language literacy instruction was provided at home (although program personnel discouraged it), and another study was conducted with lower-middle and upper-lower class children (Tucker, Lambert, & d'Anglejan, 1973). Results obtained with this subject population were highly similar to those reported earlier, but it is important to note that the subjects continued to be volunteers. Subsequent studies in Ottawa (Barik & Swain, 1975) have revealed similar results.

Cautiously interpreted, these results appear to indicate

that a carefully implemented direct method approach enables children to successfully learn a second language and to transfer reading skills acquired in the second language to the native language. The argument that children learn best through their native language would appear to be weakened by the results of the Canadian experiments.

Endorsement for English immersion programs in the U.S. based upon the Canadian model (e.g., Campbell, 1970) has not been forthcoming for several reasons. In the first place, the bilingual education context in the U.S. differs significantly from that in Canada. Canada is officially a bilingual nation; the United States is not. Subjects in the Canadian experiments have been members of the majority group; bilingual education in the U.S. has typically been viewed as a compensatory program for minority-group children. Finally, participants in the Canadian experiments have been volunteers whose parents encouraged their participation; bilingual program participants in the U.S. have been selected on the basis of surname or, more recently, performance on language diagnostic measures. It is not at all clear whether the success attained in the Canadian context would be realized here with this significant difference in variables.

On the one hand, then, research studies supporting claims about the superiority of the native language approach are limited in both number and quality. On the other, the carefully documented research demonstrating the success of the direct method approach in Canada may not be directly relevant to bilingual education contexts in the United States, except perhaps for majority-group vol-

unteers. It may be concluded that most previous research on how best to teach reading to children in bilingual settings provides few answers, primarily because this research was conducted in settings which differ markedly from those in the U.S., and because much of this research was beset with serious methodological weaknesses (e.g., lack of proper controls on variables such as teacher competencies and program quality, and design problems resulting in a Hawthorne effect in the experimental populations). Clearly, there is a need for carefully designed and conducted research into those issues which are basic to the teaching of reading to bilingual children in the U.S. context. Two such issues underlying native language literacy programs, namely, the specification of the native language and the transfer of reading skills, will now be considered.

Specification of the Native Language

One of the first issues with which the proponents of native language literacy must deal is the specification of the native, first, or dominant language of the child who is to be taught to read. Remarks here will be limited to Spanish-speaking populations, and specifically to Mexican-American children, but there are undoubtedly parallels among all minority-group populations, including speakers of Black English (cf. Melmed, 1973).

Much of the prior research into native language literacy has been conducted among subject population that appear to be more linguistically homogeneous than are most minority groups in the U.S. The geographical or social isolation that charcterized some of these research populations (e.g., Indians in Modiano's Chiapas,

study) is not typically present in the U.S. Even recent immigrants are immediately exposed to the cultural and linguistic features of the English-speaking environment which have permeated not only the speech of most residents but also all forms of media. Fifteen minutes of Spanish-language radio broadcasting in the El Paso/Juarez area revealed, among many others, the following examples of English integration: "La funeraria X le ofrece servicio personal basado en interés"; "La instalación es obtenible a bajo precio"; "X abre sus puertas a las cinco con Happy Hour hasta las diez"; and "Son veinte minutos después de las dos P.M."[5] Nash's descriptions of "Spanglish" (1970) and "Englañol" (1971) in Puerto Rico reveal similar phenomena.

Terms such as "native Spanish speaking" and "bilingual" are often used loosely to refer to a group of children whose linguistic backgrounds and language competencies may vary considerably.[6] (It is interesting to note the shifts in terminology, from "Spanish-surnamed" to "Spanish-speaking" or "bilingual" to the more recent "Spanish-heritage," which have characterized efforts to identify the population in question. None of these labels is entirely satisfactory, largely because of the heterogeneity of the group, i.e., some Spanish-surnamed are not Spanish-speaking, some Spanish-speaking are not bilingual, and so on.) In the first place, there are three principal dialect origins of Spanish spoken in the United States: Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican. Discrepancies between these dialects and standard written Spanish, on the phonological, grammatical, and lexical levels, are similar to those observed

between regional American dialects of English and the standard written form of the language. Monolingual children in Spanish-speaking counties have successfully dealt with these dialect variations, as have their English-speaking counterparts in the U.S.

Spanish dialect variations in the United States are, however, much more complex than their mere geographical origins suggest. Differences among and within these three dialect groups have been heightened by their existence in an English-language context. Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles speak a dialect considerably different from that spoken in New Mexico and from that spoken in South Texas. Although all these dialects have their origins in Mexican Spanish, they differ in pronunciation, grammar and lexicon. The extent to which English is integrated into these dialects and the specific lexical and grammatical features of English that are integrated vary from place to place, as a result of multiple variables in each language contact setting. For example, Mexican-American girls in El Paso may celebrate their fifteenth birthday with una fiesta de quinceañera while their counterparts in south-central Texas may have una fiesta de "sweet fifteen." Groceria is commonly used for "grocery store" in one location and is ridiculed in another. Archaic Spanish forms such as asina (así) are used regularly in one area and not in another. Social variations also occur, e.g., some Chicano activists use the term carnal for "brother," while more traditional Mexican-Americans do not (cf. Elías-Olivares, 1975).

Language attitudes also significantly affect the language

each native Spanish-speaking child brings to school. In the same neighborhood, some families continue (consciously or unconsciously) to speak a dialect of Mexican Spanish. Others speak some Spanish and some English, depending upon the topic and the presence of certain family members (e.g., grandparents) and outsiders. Others freely mix English and Spanish within the same conversation and even the same sentence, e.g., "Her leg, estaba así, sticking out." Still other families make a very concerted effort to use only English which, in their view, will better prepare their children for school and later life. A recent conversation with two speech pathologists in the El Paso area is illustrative of this wide variation. In attempting to devise a diagnostic language test for "Spanish-speaking" preschool children, these pathologists' frustration had become intense because, although approximately the same age and from the same area, they were unable to agree on labels for some very common objects that were to be used as test stimuli. They represent, in my experience, the rule rather than the exception. It is not all uncommon to enter a first-grade classroom where there are wide discrepancies in the prior language experience of the pupils in the class.

In the absence of investigations related to teaching Spanish-dialect-speaking children to read in standard Spanish, it is perhaps appropriate to review the extensive literature concerning the question of Black dialect interference in learning to read standard English (cf. Shuy, 1973; Somervil, 1975). Some researchers (e.g., Baratz, 1973) argue that the significance of

Black dialect differences on both phonological and grammatical levels requires the development of specialized dialect reading materials. Others, however, have concluded that dialect variation on the phonological level has little disruptive effect on the reading process, and that dialect involvement on the morphemic and structural levels is extremely limited (Burke, 1973). Regardless of the outcome of these arguments, important questions are being raised concerning possible Black dialect interference in learning to read standard English. The same questions should be investigated when dialects of Spanish are the issue; lexical variation alone strongly suggests that dialect interference in learning to read standard Spanish may occur.

Those who argue for teaching reading first in Spanish, citing the psychological, social, linguistic and pedagogical advantages to initial reading in the native language, often seem to ignore the wide divergence between the Spanish in written materials and that spoken by the children for whom the native language approach is recommended. The issue is not simply one of a native language approach versus a direct English approach; the dialect factor, widely discussed in terms of Black English speakers, may be of even greater relevance within the context of teaching reading to Spanish-speaking children.

Transfer of Reading Skills

A second issue which must be dealt with by proponents of native language literacy in bilingual education programs involves the transfer of reading skills from one language to another. Al-

though the successful acquisition of reading skills in two languages revealed in the Canadian immersion and some other bilingual programs appears to provide some support for the claim that these skills transfer quite readily (Saville & Troike, 1971; Gutierrez, 1975), it is not at all clear how such transfer takes place nor what factors are relevant to its occurrence.

It seems reasonable to assume that the nature of the two languages involved in the transfer and the specific characteristics of the writing systems of these two languages play some role in the ease with which transfer takes place. Languages which present to the reader markedly different cues on the morphological and syntactical levels might be expected to present greater obstacles to transfer than those languages which are more closely related. If such differences are also accompanied by significant differences in the writing systems (e.g., ideographic vs. alphabetic, or even Cyrillic vs. Roman alphabetic), difficulties might be expected to be even greater. My own personal experience as an adult attempting to learn to read Swahili and Russian after successful experiences with English and several Romance languages attests to the importance of both linguistic and writing system differences in transferring reading skills from one language to another. It would thus appear that if claims about the transfer of reading skills are to be made, some consideration must be given the similarities and differences between the languages in question and their writing systems. Such claims probably can most safely be made about languages which are closely related, but even here, caution must be exercised. Considering the close relationship

between Black and standard English, for example, the recommendation that transitional readers be utilized to facilitate the transfer from dialect readers to standard English written material (cf. Ching, 1976, p. 8) suggests that transfer is far from automatic.

Related to the claim about the transfer of reading skills is the notion that some languages provide for easier reading acquisition than others. It is argued that this advantage should be exploited in teaching children to read. Thus, Saville and Troike (1971) state: "The child who learns to read first in Spanish or Navajo may have, in fact, a definite advantage over the child who must learn first in English. The writing system of English is not regular, and children must learn that a single sound may be spelled in many different ways. The writing system of Spanish and that which has been developed for Navajo are very regular, with close correspondence between sounds and letters. The child's ability to recognize the relationship between sound and symbol is a major factor in his success in initial reading instruction." (p. 50) Thus, it is argued that since transfer occurs almost automatically, reading instruction is facilitated by learning in a language which is more regular in its sound-symbol correspondences. To put this argument in perspective, it is interesting to examine more closely specific features of the Spanish writing system (a "regular" system) and their carryover to English.

A truly regular writing system would involve a consistent one-to-one correspondence between sounds and symbols. Nuclear vowels in Spanish do bear such a correspondence. Diphthongs, on

the other hand do not, e.g., hay (there is) vs. aire (air). Consonants vary considerably. The Spanish writing system includes both a b and a v which correspond to the same sound; i.e., the initial sounds in beso (kiss) and vez (time) are pronounced the same. The h in words such as hombre (man) and hora (hour) represents no sound. /s/ may be represented by s (sábado/Saturday), c (cielo/sky) or z (zapato/shoe); /k/ by c (casa/house) or qu (quince/fifteen); /y/ by i (hielo/ice), y (yo/I), or ll (calle/street); /h/ by x (México), j (hijo/son), or g (gente/people), and so on. Learning to read in Spanish involves learning the rules for mapping these spellings to the sounds they represent.

Transferring reading skills from Spanish to English involves the readjustment of the sound-symbol correspondences characteristic of Spanish to those of English. Thus, for example, the letter h, which in Spanish is always mute, is sometimes mute in English, as in hour, but may also represent an /h/ in words such as hat and her. The ll, which in Spanish corresponds to /y/, typically represents /l/ in English, as in bullet or pulling. b and v, which correspond to a single sound in Spanish, represent two distinct sounds in English. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the learner, the regular correspondences between vowel symbols and sounds observed in Spanish must be adjusted to a variety of vowel sound-symbol correspondences in English. Thus, in addition to acquiring a new phonological system in oral English (new vowel and consonant sounds in new positions and combinations), the native Spanish-speaking child who learns to read initially in Spanish will also have to learn new sound-symbol correspondences

as he moves from reading in Spanish to literacy in English. Considerable research will be required before a claim can be made that a language with relatively more regular sound-symbol correspondences facilitates the acquisition of reading skills and the subsequent transfer of these skills to reading in another (less regular) language. Such research would have to involve a rank-ordering of languages on a scale of orthographic "regularity," as well as a matrix of orthographic correspondences (both regularities and irregularities) among languages.

Further, grapheme-sound correspondences represent only one aspect of learning to read. Reviewing approaches to beginning reading instruction, Weber (1970) pointed out that "...grammatical structure as an aspect of context has hardly been considered in regard to reading, despite its central position in the language as the vehicle for semantic as well as extralinguistic content and despite the well-known restrictions on the occurrence of words in sentences that grammar entails" (p. 147). Levin and Kaplan's studies of experienced readers (1970) demonstrate the effects of grammatical constraints on reading, namely, that such constraints enable the reader to formulate correct hypotheses about what will follow. "When the prediction is confirmed, the material covered by that prediction can be more easily processed and understood" (p. 132). The transfer of reading skills from one language to another must necessarily involve such higher-level constraints in both languages. Claims about the ease with which the transfer of reading skills occurs, especially those that appear to rest primarily (or even exclusively) on the regularity of given ortho-

graphic systems, are clearly overstated. The studies reviewed in Engle (1975) reveal that almost no consideration has been given to the identification of those specific aspects of reading that should transfer from learning to read in one language to learning to read in another.

The transfer process has been of considerable interest to researchers in the area of second language acquisition Recent research suggests an underlying linguistic system in second-language speech, an "interlanguage," which is at least partially distinct from both native and target languages (Selinker, 1972). Interlanguage involves strategies or cognitive activities relating to the processing of second-language data in the attempt to express meaning. Although the emphasis of this work has been on language production, it seems reasonable to consider the possibility that a similar underlying interlingual system may be involved in learning to derive meaning from written materials in a second language. Related here is Kolers' research into the coding of isolated words and the reading of bilingual connected discourse by skilled French-English bilingual readers, where it is suggested that "words are perceived and remembered preferentially in terms of their meanings and not in terms of their appearance or sounds" (1970, p. 111). Becoming a bilingual reader requires more than the mere acquisition of new grapheme-sound correspondences, just as becoming a bilingual speaker involves more than learning new sounds and a new vocabulary.

The present state of our knowledge about second language acquisition and the acquisition of reading skills in a first lan-

guage is such that we can only speculate about how reading skills transfer from one language to another. Brown (1970) suggests that a child "operates on speech with a large number of effective heuristics. The majority of these, with accomodations for the visual medium, are probably applicable also in reading" (p. 186). Since we are only now beginning to have an idea of the nature of these heuristics, claims about how they transfer from one language to another are probably premature.

Alternate Approaches to Reading Instruction

In the light of the historical background of reading in bilingual education and the paucity of research directly relevant to the basic issues just discussed, it is interesting to consider some practical implications of three possible alternatives to reading instruction in bi- or multilingual settings. (It will be noted that no mention will be made of the "common core" or "neutral" approach suggested for speakers of Black English, where an attempt is made to minimize dialect and cultural differences in reading materials. In addition to the problem of the awkward and unnatural product which is likely to result from such an effort in one language, there is obviously no way that the differences between two languages can be "minimized"; that is, there is no common core, except perhaps for a few cognate words.)

Reading in the standard native language. Reading instruction in bilingual settings may be introduced in the standard native language, e.g., standard Spanish. As was indicated earlier, instruc-

tion in standard Spanish as a second dialect is probably a necessary prerequisite for most Spanish-dialect-speaking children if standard Spanish reading instruction is to be seriously considered (cf. Barker, 1971, pp. iii-iv). Although the dialects of some children reveal a rather well-developed phonological, grammatical, and lexical control of the standard dialect, others show considerable deviation from the standard, and still others a high level of English integration on both grammatical and lexical levels.

Teaching a second dialect, once highly recommended as the solution to preparing speakers of Black English to read in standard English, has proved to be a much more difficult task than was initially anticipated. Although some researchers (e.g., Venezky & Chapman, 1973) continue to recommend standard-English-as-a-second-dialect training for nonstandard-dialect-speaking children, others (e.g., Kochman, 1969 and Wolfram, 1970) question whether such training should or even can be accomplished. Factors which appear to be relevant to the difficulties encountered in second dialect training include peer group pressure on the language of children in the initial school years, broad socio-cultural pressures against standard language teaching in some minority-group settings, and verbal learning research which suggest that highly similar material is difficult to learn.

Teaching standard Spanish as a second dialect will inevitably involve many of the same problems encountered in attempting to teach standard English as a second dialect. Despite the considerable time and expertise that have been applied to such efforts in English, results indicate that we have been "grossly inefficient

in teaching standard English at any level" (Shuy, 1973, p. 13). Although there is very little direct experience upon which to base predictions of success in teaching standard Spanish as a second dialect, the English example does not make such efforts appear promising.

The teacher variable seems particularly significant in the case of Spanish. Most teachers who have been abruptly drafted into teaching in bilingual education programs on the elementary school level have little or no experience in teaching standard Spanish. (A few may have limited experience in the area of teaching Spanish to speakers of English.) Many teachers who have become involved in bilingual education programs are themselves native speakers of various dialects of Spanish, but few have had formal training in the standard language. Some read standard Spanish only with great difficulty. Teachers who are aware of their limited competence in the standard language are naturally insecure when expected to teach it, and classroom experiences often contribute to this insecurity. (For example, I once observed in a bilingual classroom a bulletin board containing pictures of common objects and their Spanish names. Next to a picture of a toy appeared the label <u>hugete</u>. Shortly thereafter an alert first-grader remarked to the teacher that in his book the word for "toy" looked different. The teacher then realized that the correct spelling of this word was <u>juguete</u>.) The situation is even more complicated in bilingual classrooms where a monolingual English-speaking teacher is assisted by a Spanish-speaking aide whose formal education may be quite limited.

Teaching standard Spanish under conditions such as these is not likely to be successful.

Inservice training of teachers in standard Spanish might appear to be the answer, and such training is being conducted in some bilingual endorsement and certification programs. The difficulties encountered in attempting to teach standard English should be borne in mind, however, when contemplating the preparation of teachers to teach standard Spanish as a second dialect. If teaching a second dialect is indeed as difficult as it appears to be, training in standard Spanish may create teacher expectations which will never be realized. (On the other hand, an indirect benefit of such instruction may be a greater sensitivity on the part of teachers to the problems encountered by the nonstandard dialect speakers in their classrooms. Such increased teacher sensitivity is strongly recommended by most specialists in the area of education for the linguistically different, regardless of the divergence in their opinions about how such education should be carried out.)

If oral language training in Spanish must precede the introduction of reading, there will, of course, be some delay in introducing reading. Minority group parents, many of whom are eager to see their children aspire to higher educational goals than those they themselves were able to attain, would probably be as intolerant of delayed reading instruction as middle-class parents have proven to be (Baratz, 1973). Further, it is not at all clear that parents support an early school emphasis on Spanish. Anecdotal

evidence from interactions with school administrators and teachers in the Southwest suggests that at least some Mexican-American parents feel that the school's responsibility is to teach their children to speak and read "good" English; Spanish, irrespective of variety, is not considered to be a crucial component of their children's education. (It should be noted that schools themselves tend to reinforce such attitudes by phasing out the use of Spanish-language materials after the initial school years. Thus, although it is claimed that learning to read in Spanish in the first grade offers long-range educational benefits, curricula from the middle school years onward contain no application of Spanish literacy skills.)

Finally, teaching children a second dialect of Spanish, if indeed possible, must inevitably be accompanied or followed by instruction in English. Thus, during the initial years of classroom instruction, Spanish-dialect-speaking children must learn a second dialect and a second language. We know very little about how second language and second dialect acquisition occur (Ervin-Tripp, 1970), but there is some recent evidence to suggest that the optimum age for second language learning is not between four and ten years of age as originally suggested by the Modern Language Association (1956). Ervin-Tripp (1974) found that older children learned number, gender and syntax more rapidly than did younger children. Initial pronunciation and retention of vocabulary were found to increase with age by Politzer & Weiss (1969). Research conducted by Fathman (1975) revealed that pre-

teen children appeared to be more successful at learning phonology, but children between eleven and fifteen years of age were more successful in learning grammar. Engle (1975), citing research conducted by Stern in Sweden and Lavallee in Switzerland, suggests that the initial school years (6 - 8 years of age) may, in fact, be the least appropriate for teaching a second language; children younger than six and older than ten years of age appear to show greater motivation and achievement. The advisability of attempting to teach a second dialect and a second language (and literacy in both) during the early school years must, thus, be seriously questioned.[7]

Spanish Dialect Readers. A second possible approach to the introduction of reading to native Spanish-speaking children involves the use of Spanish dialect readers. Experience with Black dialect readers should be indicative of the problems which might result in attempting to pursue this approach to beginning reading instruction (cf. Baratz, 1973; Leaverton, 1973). The wide variations in Spanish dialects rule out the publication of a single U.S. Spanish-dialect reader (cf. Fishbein, 1973). Questions concerning the use of English borrowings, such as tichar, baby, and bye-bye, would have to be dealt with, as would nonstandard Spanish dialect forms such as semos (somos), haiga (haya), suidad (ciudad), and aigre (aire). If a dialect reader could be agreed upon for one location, its acceptability in other areas would be unlikely. Teachers could, of course, construct ad hoc dialect readers using the language experience approach, but time constraints would undoubtedly

prohibit widespread use of such teacher-made dialect materials. Some teachers might also be expected to react negatively to materials containing what they consider to be nonstandard or even incorrect Spanish. Parents, whose expectations of schools are high, might even be shocked to find "bad" Spanish in their children's school materials, and problems in community relations might result (cf. Baratz, 1973, p. 109). Finally, the apparently complex series of learning requirements involved in the transitions from Spanish dialect readers to standard Spanish readers and subsequently to standard English readers would seem to represent an extremely ambitious set of objectives for the initial years of schooling.

Teaching Reading in English. A third alternative to teaching reading to Spanish-dialect-speaking children is the direct method, where initial contact with reading is made in the second language, English. As was discussed earlier, French language programs in Canada which use this approach have proved to be highly successful. In such programs, children are first introduced to oral language skills in the second language, and fluency in the oral language is required before reading is introduced. Children are permitted to use their native language with each other and with their teacher during the first year of school; the teacher interacts with the children only in the second language, translating their questions and comments and responding to them exclusively in the target language. (It will be noted that this approach differs somewhat from earlier English immersion programs in the U.S. where use of the native language was usually discouraged.)

The question of the appropriateness of teaching a second language to children in the initial years of schooling, mentioned above in connection with teaching standard Spanish as a second dialect is, of course, relevant here. Although the results of the Canadian studies appear to indicate that the total immersion approach is highly successful in second language teaching at this age level, further research into the optimal age for second language acquisition, especially among minority group children, is necessary before final conclusions can be drawn.

Also relevant here is the problem of delaying reading instruction until the direct method approach has successfully developed oral language competence in the children who are to be taught to read in a second language. Teacher and parental attitudes which evaluate the success of a school by how quickly children begin to read would require reshaping. Also relevant is the requirement in most school districts that standardized achievement testing be conducted in areas such as reading. Teachers, even those who recognize the inappropriateness of given tests to the context in which they work, often feel pressured to prepare their pupils for annual testing, and requisite steps in the learning process may be by-passed. The direct English language approach seems particularly vulnerable to such pressures, and the result may be the introduction of reading in English prior to the establishment of a solid oral language foundation.

Finally, regardless of research results concerning the efficacy of one pedagogical approach over another, the importance

of the socio-political context within which bilingual education takes place should not be underestimated. The climate for English-language immersion programs in the U.S. is decidedly unfavorable (Cohen & Swain, 1976). Evidence of poorly conceived and implemented direct method English-language programs, and a growing interest in the definition of ethnic identities and the preservation and enhancement of ethnic languages and cultures are strong factors in support of the native language approach. Further, research in language planning (cf. Drake, 1975) suggests that if bilingualism is a desired goal, the social prestige of minority languages must figure in the design of language instruction in the early school years since lower prestige languages are more likely to be abandoned. Lambert and Tucker (1972), for example, state that "priority for early school should be given to the language or languages least likely to be developed otherwise, that is, the languages most likely to be neglected" (p. 216). Thus, the probability of preserving bilingual/biculturalism in a given location is apparently greater when the lower prestige language is the initial language of instruction in the early school years, either as a native language for minority-group children, or, as in Canada, as a second language for majority-group children.

Conclusions

There is obviously no ready answer to the question of how best to teach reading to children from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Everyone seems to agree that schools must give proper recognition to such children and to what they know upon entering

school, but there is little or no agreement about how best to proceed from what they know to what they ought to learn, nor even about what ought to be learned. Most current discussions focus on social, political, and even emotional factors, not only because such factors are real and must be acknowledged, but also because data concerning the linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical bases and implications of one or another approach are extremely limited and often contradictory. We still know relatively little about the dialects of non-English-speaking groups in the U.S., about how a second dialect or second language is acquired, about optimal ages for such acquisition, or about how reading skills transfer from one language to another.

A large number of bilingual programs are currently being implemented throughout the United States, and almost all of such programs contain a research component. Unfortunately, however, the single research interest which such components most often serve is that relating to program justification. Such evaluation research is unlikely to provide insights into the basic issues of teaching reading to the bilingual child. Basic research in connection with bilingual programs is a clear necessity. In the absence of data from such basic research, arguments about which approach to reading is best will go on without significant progress toward resolution.

FOOTNOTES

1. The full text of the opinion of the Supreme Court, written by Justice William O. Douglas, appears in THE LINGUISTIC REPORTER, 1974, 16, 3, pp. 6-7.
2. The guidelines are reproduced in their entirety in THE LINGUISTIC REPORTER, 1975, 18, 2, pp. 5-7. It should be noted that a recent (April, 1976) memorandum distributed by the Office of Civil Rights of HEW attempts to clarify these guidelines. The result appears to be a relaxation of the requirements governing the implementation of bilingual education programs.
3. One must ask at this point what is meant by the suggestion that literacy approaches explicitly consider psychological variables such as the affective and cognitive development of students. To raise this question is not to deny the psychological impact on children of their educational experience, but rather to make explicit the requirement that empirical evidence undergird any claim that one approach leads to greater psychological benefit than another. Without such evidence, arguments such as this one become meaningless exercises.
4. The fact that a study published in 1968 continues to be the most widely cited in support of the native language literacy approach, in spite of the tremendous growth in the number of bilingual education programs in the U.S. since then, attests to the paucity of relevant research in this area.
5. For the benefit of those not familiar with Spanish, these examples involve the use of both English lexicon (e.g., "Happy

Hour" and "P.M.") and English syntactical patterns.

6. The title of this paper provides an excellent example of the problem. "Bilingual" is used to refer to a broad range of linguistic competencies, from monolingualism in a language other than English to fluent bilingualism in both English and another language.
7. Examples of young children who successfully learn two or more languages, often without apparent effort, probably do not provide strong counter-evidence to this statement, just as pre-school children who learn to read without formal instruction do not negate the need for attempts to improve the teaching of reading in our schools.

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June 8--A.M.

OPEN DISCUSSION OF NATALICIO PRESENTATION

TRABASSO: I think you raise a tremendous range of problems with the whole issue; it's a rather pessimistic paper.

NATALICIO: I know.

TRABASSO: That is, in reading through your paper, and also thinking today, I was looking for some answers, and I wonder if you have any strong suggestions that you would be willing to make, given this rather bleak outlook on what might be even possible?

NATALICIO: Well, I think there are a couple of things. One is that bilingual education has happened very fast; that the whole business of bilingual education came very quickly, and people have not been properly prepared. I think that the whole notion of teacher sensitivity is a big area that just needs to be worked on. It seems to me that if we could hang loose about this, and just teach children in a much more relaxed sort of way, we would probably be better off. The dogmatism bothers me a lot. I recognize that it probably is important for convincing both the community in which a bilingual program occurs, and perhaps funding sources, of the importance and efficacy of all of this, but I think that the dogmatism definitely has to be toned down and I think it will be in time. I think teacher training is tremendously important.

One of the great problems now is that when you talk about bilingual education, or you talk about reading instruction in the native language, what you mean varies tremendously, and this has come out repeatedly in this meeting. One of the things you find for example is one teacher calls bilingual education 15

minutes of Spanish a day, another once calls bilingual education talking in Spanish all day long, and another one switches from Spanish to English during the course of the day. So any kind of statement you might make about a bilingual program, whether this program is better than that program, is generalizing with a lot of terms that are not at all clear. So I am not too hopeful right now, frankly.

WEDDINGTON: What do you think would be the effect of bilingualism as valuable rather than looking at bilingualism as being compensatory for minority groups; bilingualism throughout, so that the majority group youngsters would be brought to value it?

NATALICIO: I am very much in favor of that, and I think it's a really good idea. Unfortunately, one of the effects of the compensatory model, as it's been implemented in this country, is that there has been very little appeal for majority group members to participate in bilingual education programs, and in a city like El Paso, where more than half of the people speak Spanish, natively, there is tremendous hostility toward the Spanish language and toward bilingual education on the part of the Anglo culture. And I think that this change in attitudes is something that is going to have to occur before bilingual education has any credibility. Because right now it is viewed as a means of helping these unfortunate people who can't make it otherwise. As long as that's the view, it's never going to take hold, nor receive any kind of respect.

WEDDINGTON: Were any studies made of the Cubans in Florida, inasmuch as they were middle class, and had to learn English, were any studies made of what happened with them?

NATALACIO: Well, there have been a number of program evaluations of the Coral Way School half-a-day program, they had a half a day in Spanish and a half a day in English. One of the interesting things that seems to be happening in Florida, is that there are predictions now that bilingual education will be phased out within 10 to 15 years, because the younger people are simply no longer interested in Spanish, they have become members of the Florida community.

CAZDEN: Given what we know now, what is the most reasonable approach, or are you advocating a variety of approaches?

NATALICIO: Yes, I think that variety would be an excellent way to approach it, because I think we could get better answers if we tried different things. Right now we are sort of working in a very uniform way with the idiosyncrasies of each program under consideration. But with such differences, I mean, each community is different, and the people, the parents, the teachers, the children, their language is different, their attitudes are different, and so on. And I think that ideally we should proceed with bilingual education. I am not at all opposed to bilingual education, although it may sound like I am. I think that we should proceed with it. But I think that we ought to try different approaches. For example, I think we ought to try the English language immersion approach, because I don't think it's been given a fair trial in this country. Now, politically that's a very unpopular position to take, but I thing it's worth trying, because the Canadian model is very convincing. Now, there are differences in variables, and it may not work. But I think it should be given a trial, and right now I don't think it really is.

CAZDEN: Even if you could do the immersion, legally, would it meet guidelines?

NATALICIO: No, it wouldn't. That is one of the problems. This is very much a federally controlled program at this time, and although the federal guidelines state that there are three alternatives (a transition model, a maintenance model, and so on), in fact what this is is a transition compensatory model. That's what it's turned out to be. I know of no school district, and I stand to be corrected, that proceeds after, say, the fourth grade, and continues some kind of bilingual orientation.

GLASER: From what you say, this is a beautiful case of political decisions having to come before any reasonable research can be done. I guess this is one case where you almost have to attempt political solutions before you know what the relevant research questions are.

NATALICIO: Yes, I think one of the real problems here is that we are almost guaranteeing the failure of bilingual education programs. As long as we have the compensatory model, and as long as attitudes are what they are in many Chicano communities, that is, English is the prestige language and Spanish is definitely not a prestige language, the kind of ideal goals of bilingual education will never be achieved.

CARROLL: This is a very, very socio-political problem. Diana said that the English immersion system has never been given a good try in this country. Well, that may be the case, except that 20 years ago I was in the Southwest observing English instruction in Navajo schools, conducted by good teachers in many cases. I would say that that was an English immersion program. The only thing I might fault about that situation was perhaps the use of punishment for the use of Navajo.

NATALICIO: That's not serious?

CARROLL: I spent quite a lot of time on the Hopi reservation, and the children were learning English quite well, and they were permitted to use Hopi in school. I didn't see any great problems about this. So in a sense we have already given the English immersion system a fairly good workout, and we know something about its results, which vary tremendously depending upon all sorts of considerations.

And I think also we have to remember that the Canadian situation is a very special one. I spent a week in Ottawa about a month ago trying to look at that situation. I think we have to remember that in that situation it is not only that it's the majority group that's trying to learn French, but also that their particular motive for doing so is to try to carry out this notion that Canada is going to be a bilingual country. Really what they are afraid of is that Quebec will drift off from Canada, from the present federation.

A lot of these socio-political decisions seem to be based upon a lot of psychological assumptions that I don't think could be very well supported. I think the basic assumption we ought to make is that the child is extremely flexible; that children can learn a second language if they are in the situation to do so, or they can learn to read in a second language. Basically I believe the human being is very flexible.

NATALICIO: I would agree. Let me say just one thing about the English immersion programs that have been conducted; there have obviously been some very good English-as-second-language programs. In Texas, for example, it was illegal to use Spanish in the Public schools for a long time, and children were punished if they used it even on the playground. It was a very severe kind of rule. And

this memory is very fresh.

Now, I think the big difference between the total immersion programs in Canada and the kinds of programs we are talking about, is that in Canada the children are encouraged to use their native language first. As I understand it, in the first year in school children speak in their native language, which in this case would be English, and the teacher translates what the children say into French, and then responds to them in French, the teacher talking only in French. So this gives kind of a bridge to the French immersion, which then follows up in the next year. I don't know that this kind of thing has really been done in this country. It's certainly possible. But I think that this kind of control on the second language immersion is important, and may be something that ought to be tried.

SUPPES: The research questions here are enormously subtle, but what I think we are not taking advantage of is that once we leave the United States, if we look around the world, almost every possible combination of multi-lingualism exists. In Indonesia, for example, there are 97 native languages. Bahasa Indonesia as a native language is taught to everybody, but initially in most places initial instruction is in the native language.

In the Philippines, by the time a student finishes the sixth grade, he has been exposed, if he doesn't speak Tagala, to three languages. He starts in his native dialect, for initial instruction, moves to Tagala, and finishes in English.

I visited classes, and worked in schools in Ghana, in which there are three languages, at least, in terms of African languages spoken, and the teaching is in English. I haven't visited, but I know about classes in East Africa, where there

are seven languages in the classroom, and teaching is in English. What we don't have is very serious research about exactly what is going on in terms of the fluency, especially in these very complex linguistic environments.

And one of the things I would say is that opportunities exist all over the world to study every possible situation. And what I am disappointed in is the absence of serious comparative analysis.

I am not at all persuaded by Swedish data. If there is ever a homogenous society in the world, it is Sweden. So one of the problems is that we usually don't have anything like a homogenous situation. In a given classroom the range of skills is all over the map. There is a lot of Spanish and there is also a lot of English. So you don't have a situation where you are artificially forcing a second language, in the sense that because of the media there is a lot of saturation available in both languages. To what extent do we have any good data on the parallel teaching of reading in English and Spanish? I mean, I would like to know what the problems are, what is the potential of that, and do we have any serious information in situations like South Texas?

NATALICIO: I don't know of anything that's been done in terms of parallel reading. One of the primary problems is that the child is going to be dominant in one of the two languages. Some of the children who arrived recently from Mexico will be dominant in Spanish, and so trying to get it into a kind of parallel situation is often difficult, because one of the languages is going to have to be established on an oral language level.

One of the things that we are imposing on people is reading, and one of the interesting things to me, quite an eye-opener, is that on the university level we have a large number of native Spanish-speaking students, and most of these

students are illiterate in Spanish. They read English and read it well, but they cannot read Spanish.

SUPPES: So are most fifth graders who speak Spanish. They don't know how to read Spanish.

NATALICIO: That's right. The whole notion of transferring, and feeling comfortable in your own language is missing.

RESNICK: Are the Spanish dialects much more distant from standard Spanish, let's say Mexican Spanish rather than Castilian, than the various Black or Appalachian dialects from Standard English?

And if not--let me make that assumption--can we look for some of the success stories, few and far between as they may be. We have heard, partly at this meeting, partly at the preceding two, where dialect-speaking black children have successfully learned to read under intensive instructional programs. Are there any success stories among Spanish-speaking children?

NATALICIO: In terms of the dialect itself, I think that the major difference between the dialects of Spanish and standard Spanish and the dialects of black English would be on the lexical level, because of the borrowings from English. In other words, there are a lot of borrowings from English, which have affected the lexicon of the Spanish dialect speaker, and this obviously is going to have an effect on reading, if you don't do something about it. In other words, if you don't deal with the vocabulary. I think that there have been some very decent bilingual programs, but I think that you do have to establish some kind of a core of vocabulary, before you can approach the reading.

Now, some children will have this, but many will not. And you could say, "All right, exclude them, and put them in an English language program," but they are speaking a dialect of Spanish.

POPP: There is an enormous motivation, I think, for first grade children to read under almost any set of circumstances you can think of. Would you consider it an irrelevant question to ask the children what they would like to do?

NATALICIO: No. I think it's very relevant. I think it depends to a great extent on the environment that's created for them.

In other words, if their parents have been very English-oriented, and talking about, "Now, when you go to school, you are going to learn English, you are going to learn how to read in English, you are going to be educated." Then I think what they want to read is English. The teachers' attitudes of course have a big effect on them. I am not sure what the children really think about that. I think many of them, particularly those who mix English and Spanish, may not know that there is such a big difference.

POPP: They might not understand the question.

NATALICIO: That's right, they might not know that there are two languages involved.

GLASER: Would you like to see some of the college freshmen in El Paso take some of their examinations in Spanish?

NATALICIO: Oh, they do.

GLASER: They do?

NATALICIO: Yes, we teach courses in Spanish at the university.

GLASER: Examinations in biology in Spanish?

NATALICIO: Oh, yes, right.

SUPPES: They can't read Spanish, you said.

NATALICIO: No, only for those that do.

SUPPES: How can they take the biology in Spanish?

NATALICIO: Those who do read Spanish are allowed to take physics in Spanish, history in Spanish, whatever, in Spanish. Yes.

GUTHRIE: Just one comment about children's attitudes. I made very limited, informal observation of some English-speaking children in San Francisco. They were learning to read Spanish at the same time as they learned to read English, and they were immensely proud. Their parents were also proud of it, and I suspect that the children's attitude mirrored the parents' rather fully. But they were keenly aware of the differences and, in fact, paraded these badges of achievement around. And so the distinction to them was very obvious, and these were not precocious children by any means.

NATALICIO: Yes, I think you can create these kinds of conditions, and make them aware, sure.

END SESSION